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MEASURING SEPARATION IN EMERGENCIES

Pilot Summary Report
Democratic Republic of Congo

Population-Based Estimation Method

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The work reported on here was coordinated and project managed by Save the Children. Columbia University is the intellectual and methodological lead on the population-based estimation method. The pilot was conducted in collaboration with Save the Children in the DRC as well as with its partner organisation PAMI (Programme d'Appui à la Lutte Contre la Misère) and supported by the Child Protection Sub Cluster for North Kivu.

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CONTENTS

Summary

Families are the basic protective unit for children in society, and, in almost all cases, provide the best environment for meeting a child's developmental needs. An unaccompanied[1] or separated[2] child is therefore very vulnerable and at greater risk of violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect. Identifying protective and supportive interim care for a child and carrying out family tracing and reunification activities to get them back to their family as quickly as possible are two of the most significant protective interventions that humanitarian actors can make in an emergency.

The Measuring Separation in Emergencies (MSiE) project is an interagency initiative funded by the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and is coordinated by Save the Children in partnership with Columbia University and Johns Hopkins University. Additionally, it is steered by a multi-agency Advisory Panel including members of the Inter Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (IAWG UASC) and the Assessment and Measurement Task Force (A&MTF) of the Global Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). The overall aim of the MSiE project is to strengthen emergency response programmes for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) through the development of practical, field-tested tools to enhance the assessment of the scale and nature of separation in emergencies.

Based on extensive desk research and consultation, three methods for measuring separation in emergencies are currently being explored:

1. **Projection method:** This method aims to use existing population data from a given location, combined with empirical data from comparable emergencies, to generate models of UASC risk profiles characteristic of certain emergency types and phases and to test/validate those projections against actual data in existing or evolving emergencies.

2. **Population-based estimation method:** This method aims to provide a population-based estimation of the prevalence, number and basic characteristics of UASC in a defined area, affected by the same emergency, at any given point in time.

3. **Community-based surveillance method:** This method incorporates a community-based surveillance system capable of continuous, ongoing measurement of trends in the frequency and basic characteristics of UASC in defined areas over time.

[1] **Unaccompanied children** (also referred to as unaccompanied minors) are children, as per the definition in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

[2] **Separated children** are children, as per the definition in the UNCRC, who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.

This document reports on the field testing of the population-based estimation method (or 'estimation method') in North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The estimation method was used to estimate the scale and basic characteristics of separation resulting from the armed group M23's takeover of Goma in December 2012, also affecting the neighbouring territory of Nyiragongo. The pilot ran from July to August 2014.

Data for this pilot was collected primarily by using a population-based cluster survey tool. A total of 20 sites or 'clusters' (villages and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps) were selected randomly from a list of accessible and secure sites within the areas affected by the emergency (ie, Goma and Nyiragongo). Systematic random sampling was then used to select 25 households to be surveyed within each cluster. Recognising that a 20-cluster, 25-household survey might sometimes be too resource intensive to implement in an emergency setting, a technique known as the neighbourhood method was also piloted. This method facilitates the collection of information on multiple individuals through a single survey by asking survey respondents to also report about their neighbours. In the pilot, a total of 522 primary households were surveyed, including 414 households in villages and 108 households in IDP camps. Each household also reported on the two neighbouring households most proximate to their own. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions with UASC were also used as data collection methods in the pilot to gather qualitative information to inform and add to survey data on separation.

In the sample of 2,197 children living in the respondents' homes at the time of data collection, 8.47% (n=186) were separated children who had newly arrived in the household since the M23 attack. In the sample of 2,034 children living in the respondents' homes prior to the M23 attack, 5.31% (n=108) children had since departed from the household, resulting in separation from their parents or usual caregivers.

The characteristics of arriving children ('arrivals') and departing children ('departures') diverge in a few striking ways. For example, compared to departures, a much larger proportion of arrivals are very young (0–4 years). Also, most arrivals are unintentional separations and at least partially related to the death of parents or family members. In contrast, departures include a higher proportion of older children (15–17 years) and, in many situations, the departure is reportedly part of a deliberate decision-making process.

The situation in camps may deserve special attention, but because we only surveyed 108 households in four camps, it is difficult to draw conclusions from our data. Furthermore, since there is a long 'recall period' between the emergency 'event' being measured (M23 takeover of Goma in December 2012) and the point of data collection (July–August 2014), there is a risk of some imprecision in capturing separation related to the specific emergency 'event'.

In an exercise used to determine whether adults or adolescents were the most reliable survey respondents, ie, better able to report on events primarily in relation to their own household, it was found that overall there was no statistically significant difference between data collected from adults and adolescents in this pilot context.

Other lessons learned as a result of piloting the estimation method in North Kivu, with implications for further field testing and development of this method, include: (1) the need to pilot the estimation method in an acute emergency context with a much shorter recall period; (2) the use of tablets for electronic data collection, given the pressure to produce timely results in an acute emergency setting; (3) a survey powered sufficiently for disaggregation by location/site, for example villages and camps (depending on pilot context); (4) survey respondents report on one neighbour rather than two, to shorten interview time and reduce respondent fatigue; and (5) an additional method to capture the existence and scale of movement of children into residential care settings as a result of the emergency should be considered.

Background

The humanitarian community has significant experience and expertise in working with unaccompanied and separated children. However, the lack of robust data available on UASC in emergencies makes it extremely difficult to:

- generate adequate and timely funding
- design and implement the most appropriate programmes
- strengthen relevant child protection systems and influence national/international policies and laws relating to separation.

Current methods, while meeting general rapid assessment needs, fall short of providing enough nuanced and representative data to be able to reliably say how many children are unaccompanied or separated in an emergency, or to have confidence that we understand the full picture in terms of the causes of separation, the needs of separated children, and the changing situation of separation over time.

Save the Children, along with Columbia University, Johns Hopkins University and members of an interagency Advisory Panel drawn from the IAWG UASC and the A&MTF of the Global CPWG are partners working together on the more effective measurement of separation in emergencies. Together we aim to strengthen emergency response programming for UASC through the development of practical, methodologically sound methods that can be used in a majority of emergency contexts to generate robust measurement and assessment of the scale and nature of separation.

At the project outset, a set of four key questions (for all stages of an emergency) provided a broad framework for discussion on the required focus of these new measurement methods:

1. How many UASC are there?
2. Where are UASC now, where have they come from, where are they going?
3. What are the causes of separation, which children are most vulnerable to them and why?
4. What are the main support needs of UASC? What protection risks are they facing?

Informed by desk research and consultation with a range of stakeholders, technical child protection input from Advisory Panel members and guidance on appropriate methodologies from Columbia and Johns Hopkins Universities, consensus was gained at a 'Methodology Kick-Off Workshop' on the methodological approaches to be explored. Participants agreed that the priority would be to focus on the estimation or enumeration of UASC, but that the more qualitative questions (for example, the causes of separation and the needs of UASC) would also be addressed where and to the extent feasible. Three methods are currently being explored:

1. **Projection method:** This method aims to use existing population data from a given location, combined with empirical data from comparable emergencies, to generate models of UASC risk profiles characteristic of certain emergency types and phases and to test/validate those projections against actual data in existing or evolving emergencies.

2. **Population-based estimation method:** This method aims to provide a population-based estimation of the prevalence, number and basic characteristics of UASC in a defined area, affected by the same emergency, at any given point in time.

3. **Community-based surveillance method:** This method incorporates a community-based surveillance system capable of continuous, ongoing measurement of trends in the frequency and basic characteristics of UASC in defined areas over time.

This report focuses on the population-based estimation method, developed by Columbia University, and the field testing of this method in North Kivu in the DRC in the period July to August 2014. The pilot was hosted by Save the Children and supported by local partner organisation PAMI (Programme d'Appui à la Lutte Contre la Misère) as well as through the Child Protection Sub Cluster for North Kivu.

Pilot context

The Democratic Republic of Congo's five-year war officially ended on 29 June 2003, but fighting continues in the east, terrorising the civilian population. Since April 2009, the Congolese army, supported by MONUSCO, has been carrying out offensives against armed groups in North Kivu, including the newly emerged opposition movement, M23. Such conflict has caused and continues to cause significant and frequent internal displacement in North Kivu, with family separation an area of key humanitarian concern. Unaccompanied and separated children living without their primary caregivers and independently looking for ways to survive in Eastern DRC can, for example, become victims of child labour, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and abuse, or forced recruitment into armed groups.

Save the Children works directly through local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and with international partner organisations to address family separation in North Kivu. Programming includes family tracing and reunification (FTR) activity as well as awareness-raising and prevention of family separation. At strategic level, coordination takes place through the Child Protection Sub Cluster for North Kivu. The DRC therefore presents a very relevant context for piloting methods to more effectively measure separation in emergencies.

The pilot for the estimation method took place across 20 sites, including villages and IDP camps, in Goma and the neighbouring territory of Nyiragongo. Separation was measured in relation to the emergency 'event' of the armed group M23's takeover of Goma in December 2012 and its impact on the surrounding area.

Figure 1: North Kivu in the DRC

Design and methods

The objective of this estimation method is to provide a **population-based estimation** of the prevalence, number and basic characteristics of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in a defined area, affected by the same emergency, at any given point in time.

Although the **Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA) Toolkit**, endorsed by the Global CPWG for use in all emergencies, gathers indicative data on family separation, this data is predominantly qualitative and provides estimates of the number of UASC from key informants from a few sites. This data cannot, therefore, be extrapolated to the emergency-affected area or to the UASC population as a whole. The population-based estimation method aims to address this gap in the effective measurement of separation in emergencies. It is complementary to existing assessment and measurement approaches and tools.

The 'profile' of data on UASC to be collected using the population-based estimation method includes:

- total number and prevalence of UASC
- age
- sex
- unaccompanied/separated
- intentional/accidental (as proxy needs indicator)
- location/area
- primary/secondary separation
- parental status
- care status (who living with)
- camp/non-camp
- setting/site/living arrangements.

This data is collected by a **population-based cluster survey**. Population-based surveys refer to surveys in which a random sample of households (or individuals) are chosen from and used to represent a larger population of interest.

A **two-stage cluster survey** was used to collect population-based data during piloting in the DRC. **Formative qualitative methods** (for example, **key informant interviews**) were first used prior to the main data collection phase to inform and provide a context for the survey. Based on the results, adults (where possible, female heads of households) were selected as primary survey respondents.

It was estimated that the pilot would need 20 **clusters** (or sites, for example villages, IDP camps) of 25 households per cluster to detect a 5% prevalence of separation in a population of 10,000. This calculation assumed precision (confidence limits) of 1.5%. Twenty clusters were selected randomly from a list of accessible and secure sites within the areas affected by the emergency (Nyiragongo and Goma); each site was then visited and 'mapped', aided by members of the community. Systematic random sampling was then used to select the 25 survey households for each cluster.

Recognising that a 20-cluster, 25-household survey might sometimes be too resource intensive to implement in an emergency setting, we decided to also pilot a technique in the DRC aimed at reducing the required sample size. We used a type of **network sampling** known as the **neighbourhood method**.[3] The neighbourhood method facilitates the collection of information on multiple households through a single survey by asking survey respondents to report about their neighbours. In the pilot in North Kivu, each survey respondent was asked about their own household and the households of their two most proximate neighbours.

Because separated and unaccompanied children may reside in a household or may be living outside of a household (eg, in a residential care facility, on the street, with an armed group), a traditional household survey will inherently miss a segment of the population of interest. This was partially addressed by capturing two distinct populations of children. First, we measured **arrivals**, defined as separated or unaccompanied children who started living in the sampled household at any point after December 2012 (date of M23 takeover of Goma: the emergency 'event'). Second, we measured **departures**, defined as children who left the sampled household after December 2012 and were separated from their usual caregiver. Departures could include children living outside of households.

Survey questions were designed to ask about household composition in general, rather than separated children in particular. This approach was intended to reduce respondent bias in case respondents had an interest in either over- or underestimating the true number of UASC.

[3] Stark L, Warner A, Lehmann H, Boothby N and Ager A. (2013). Measuring the incidence and reporting of violence against women and girls in Liberia using the 'neighborhood method'. *Conflict and Health*, 7(1), 20-20, (2013).

As part of completing the survey form, a data collection instrument was developed whereby interviewers used blank cards to draw representations of each household member. Cards were color-coded according to whether the household member was present prior to and/or after the emergency event. The cards then prompted the interviewer to ask about the gender and age of each household member, their relationship to the head of the household, and whether they were still alive. The cards were then 'mapped' on a sheet of paper to give a clear picture of the household composition and how it had changed in relation to the emergency 'event'. Where children who were arrivals or departures were identified (potentially UASC), this prompted the interviewer to ask additional questions about those children's circumstances and to complete additional forms .The same process was used to elicit information about all three households of interest.

In conjunction with the population-based survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were also undertaken at selected survey sites in order to triangulate, supplement and qualify the quantitative data obtained. Interviews were carried out with village chiefs and camp committee representatives at 17 of the 20 surveyed sites. Six focus group discussions were undertaken with groups of 8–10 UASC aged 13–17.

Findings

Surveys were conducted with 522 primary households in Nyiragongo territory and in Goma, including 414 households in villages and 108 households in camps. In the sample of 2,197 children living in respondents' homes at the time of data collection, 8.47% (n=186) were separated children who had arrived in the household since the M23 attack. In the sample of 2,034 children living in the respondents' homes prior to the M23 attack, 5.31% (n=108) children had since departed from the household, resulting in separation from their parents or usual caregivers.

Table 1: Prevalence of separation in primary households

	Arrivals			Departures		
	N	Prevalence	95% CI	N	Prevalence	95% CI
Separation (overall)	186/2,197	8.47%	(7.34-9.71)	108/2,034	5.31%	(4.38-6.38)
In villages	164/1,809	9.07%	(7.78-10.48)	60/1,635	3.67%	(2.81-4.70)
In camps	22/388	8.47%	5.67%	48/399	12.03%	(9.00-15.63)
Unaccompaniment	41/2,197	1.87%	(1.34-2.52)	11/2,034	0.54%	(0.27-0.97)

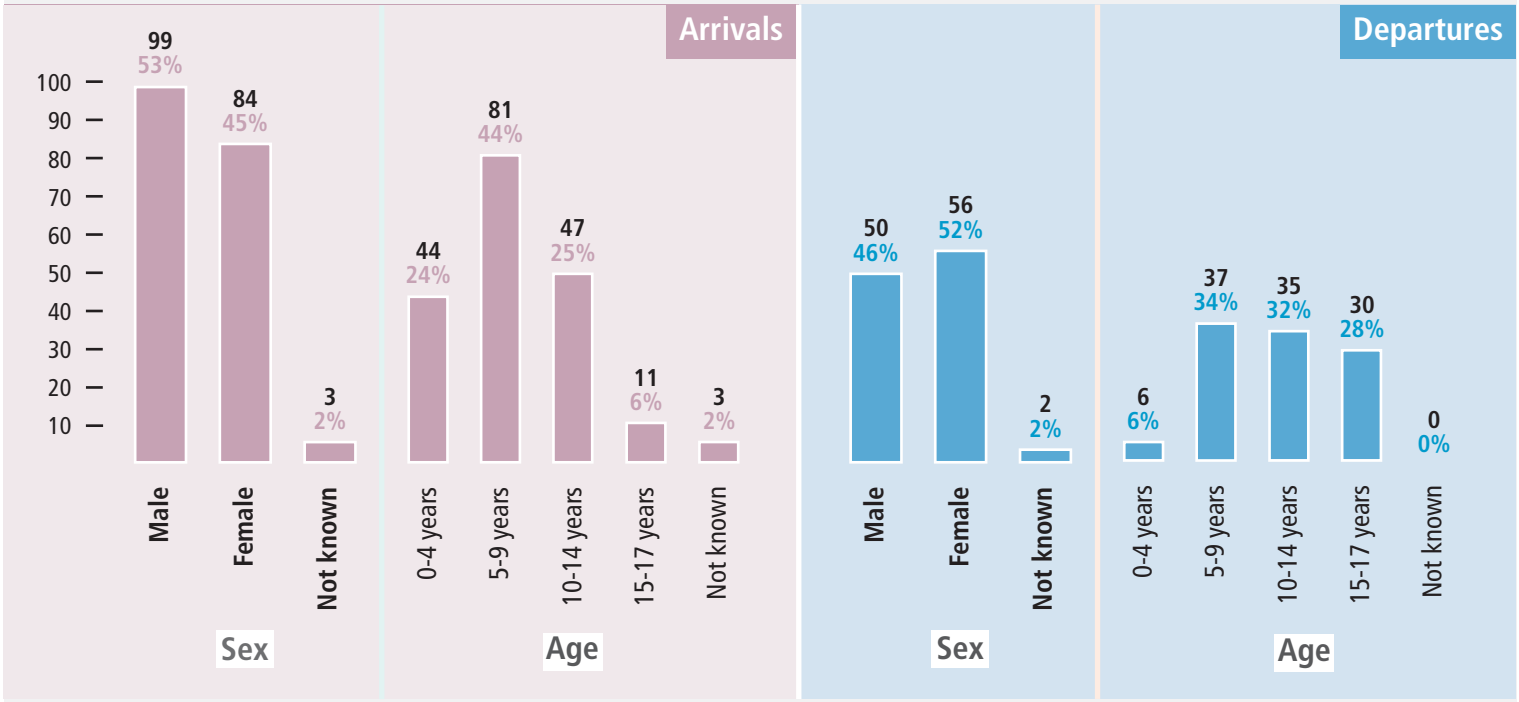
Arrivals

In the sample of all 2,197 children living in the primary respondents' homes at the time of data collection, 8.47% (n=186) were separated children who had arrived in the household since the M23 attack in December 2012. Of all children in the primary households, 1.87% (n=41) were unaccompanied, meaning they were living alone or with adults to whom they were not related. These 41 unaccompanied children represent 22% of the 186 separated arrivals. This number is an underestimate of the total number of unaccompanied children because child-headed households – who are by definition unaccompanied – were excluded from our sample because of ethical concerns (see Table 1).[4]

[4] Please note: percentages are provided to one or two decimal places in figures for clarity but, as a result, will not always total here to 100%

Among the 186 separated arrivals, there were slightly more males than females (53% versus 45%). The largest age group was 5–9-year-olds (44%), followed by 10–14-year-olds (25%) and 0–4-year-olds (24%). Only 6% of the separated arrivals were 15–17 years old (see Figure 2). Most commonly, arriving children were related to the head of the household where they arrived, as nieces or nephews (34%) or as grandchildren (28%), with 13% having other familial relationships; 4% of arrivals were neighbours of the household heads and 18% had no relationship (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: Age and sex of separated children in primary households



The vast majority of arrivals (76%) were described as unintentional separations. Death of parents or family members was by far the most common reason for separation among arrivals, with 73% of respondents citing this as one of the factors contributing to separation. Other factors included security (10%), food insecurity (9%), housing/accommodation needs (9%), poverty (6%), running away/escape (6%) and conflict (6%). Work, school, illness and marriage were each cited by only 1% of respondents. Note that these figures represent the percentage of children for whom a given factor was cited. In some cases, there were multiple reasons contributing to the separation (see Figures 4 and 5).

Findings were also disaggregated by camps and non-camps. The prevalence of separated arrivals in camps was slightly lower than the prevalence in non-camps (5.67% versus 9.07%), but it was difficult to draw conclusions from this data due to the fact that out of the total sample of 2,197 children, only 388 children lived in camps (18%).

Departures

In the sample of all 2,034 children living in the primary respondents' homes prior to the M23 attack in December 2012, 5.31% (n=108) children were separated and departed from their parents or usual caregivers. Of all children from the primary households, 0.54% (n=11) were identified as unaccompanied, meaning they were living alone or with adults to whom they were not related. These 11 unaccompanied children represent 10% of the 108 separated departures. Importantly, for 24% of these 108 children, their care status at the time of data collection was unknown or not reported. These children are likely unaccompanied, but it was not possible to confirm this from our methods.

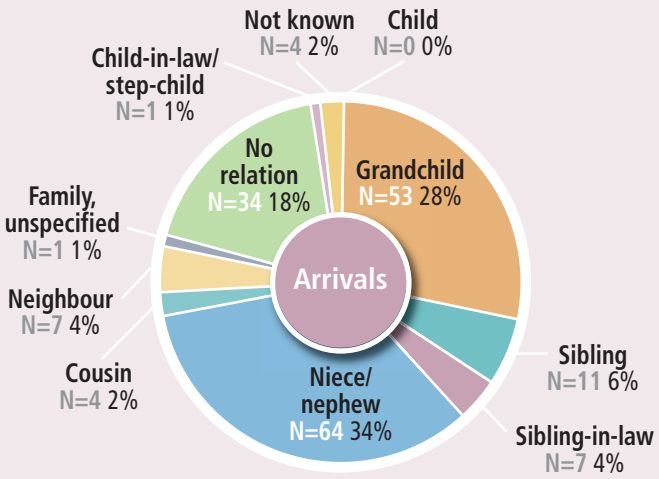
Among the 108 separated departures, there were slightly more females than males (52% versus 46%). The largest age group was 5–9-year-olds (34%), followed by 10–14-year-olds (32%) and 15–17-year-olds (28%). Only 6% of the separated departures were 0–4 years old. In other words, compared to separated arrivals, departures tended to be older (see Figure 2). Most commonly, departing children were the children of the head of the household from which they were leaving (44%), with the remaining departures almost always having some other familial relationship prior to departure. Only 5% of departures were not related to the head of the household from which they were leaving (see Figure 3).

Slightly less than half of the departures (48%) were described as expected or intentional. The most common reason for separation among departures was food insecurity, with 43% of respondents citing this as one of the factors contributing to separation. Other precipitating factors included poverty (23%), death of parents (18%), running away/escape (17%), security (14%), housing/accommodation needs (10%), work (6%), conflict (6%) and school (5%). Marriage was only cited as a reason for departure in one case. Again, these figures represent the percentage of children for whom a given factor was cited. In some cases, there were multiple reasons contributing to the separation. Also, no reasons were recorded in 17% of the cases.

At the time of data collection, many departed children were currently under the care of a grandparent (33%), an aunt or uncle (16%) or another family member (15%). However, some children were under the care of friends (6%), employers (2%), orphanages (2%) or other people with no familial relationship to the child (2%). For 24% of the departures, their current care status was unknown (see Figures 4,5 and 6).

Findings were also disaggregated by camps and non-camps. The prevalence of separated departures in camps was much higher than the prevalence in non-camps (12.03% versus 3.67%). Again, however, the sample of children living in camps was small (20% of 2,034 children) and our estimates therefore have limited precision.

Figure 3: Relationship of separated children to head of household



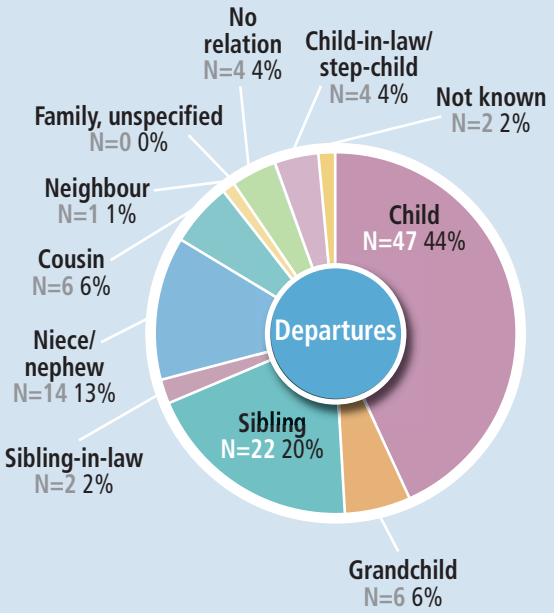
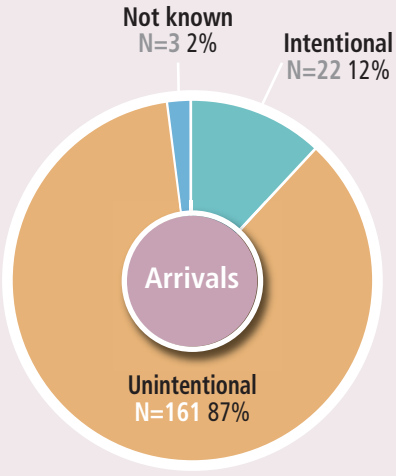


Figure 4: Cause of separation - intentional/unintentional



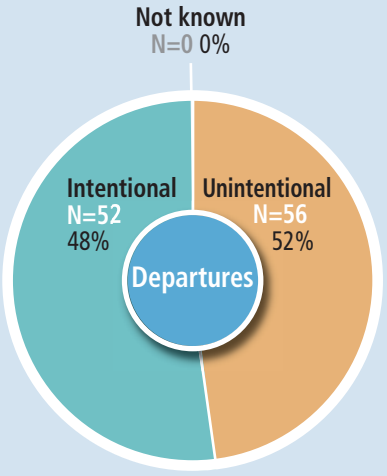


Figure 5: Reasons for separation

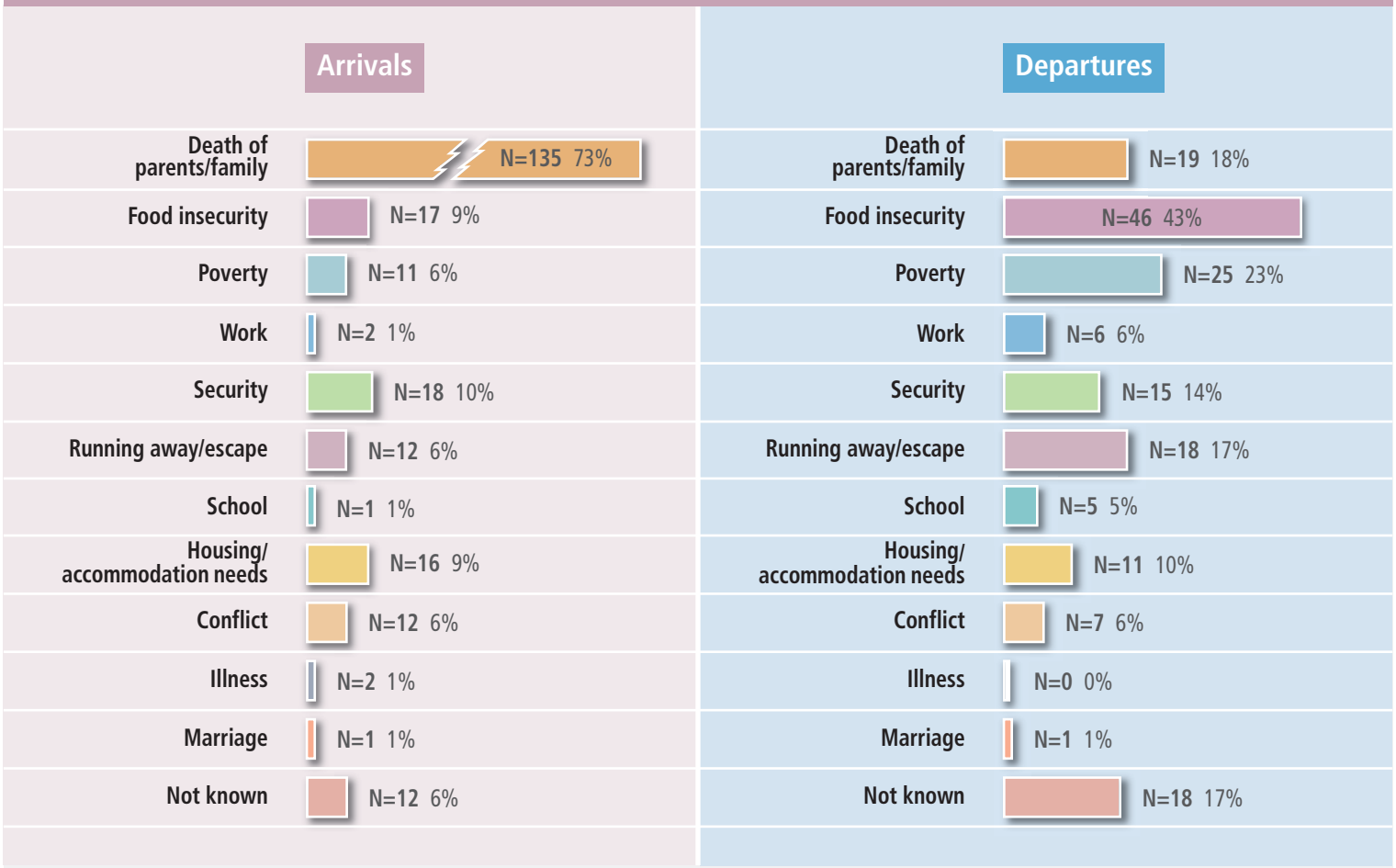
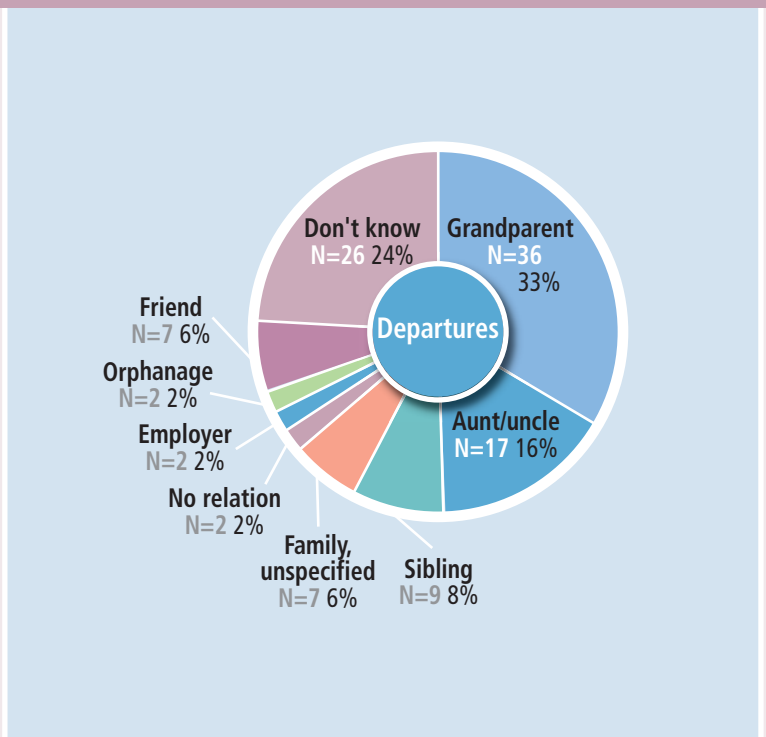


Figure 6: Current caregivers of separated children



Discussion

In our sample in North Kivu, in the period since December 2012, a greater proportion of unaccompanied and separated children have arrived than have departed. This pattern is particularly pronounced in villages. However, in camps, the pattern is reversed, with a much larger proportion of departures.

The characteristics of arrivals and departures diverge in a few striking ways. A much larger proportion of arrivals are very young (0–4 years), compared to departures. Most arrivals were unintentional and at least partially related to the death of parents or family members. In contrast, departures included a higher proportion of older children (15–17 years) and, in many situations, the departure is reportedly part of a deliberate decision-making process. Many reasons appear to factor into this departure decision, including food insecurity, poverty and escape. Death of parents or family members sometimes plays a role in departures, but much less frequently than for arrivals.

The information about arrivals is particularly relevant to service provision, since these children and their caregivers are likely to need support services. When considering programmatic responses, it is especially important to note that 68% of new arrivals are under the age of nine. Furthermore, since so many arrivals are related to death of parents or family members, reunification may not be realistic for most children and alternative care arrangements will need to be found/supported within the community.

The information about departures is relevant for prevention purposes. Families are making incredibly difficult choices to send their children away due to lack of resources or security. Efforts are needed to identify these families and provide support before the separations occur.

The recorded prevalence of unaccompanied children from the survey is likely to be an underestimate. Of all children from the sampled households, 1.87% (n=41) were reported to be arriving children who were unaccompanied. This number will, however, be lower than the total number of unaccompanied arriving children, because child-headed households – who are by definition unaccompanied – were excluded from our sample because of ethical concerns. Of all children from the sampled households, 0.54% (n=11) were identified as departed children who were unaccompanied. For another 26 separated children who departed, their care status at the time of data collection was unknown or not reported. If these children with unknown care status are assumed to be unaccompanied, the total prevalence of unaccompaniment would rise to 1.82%, but it was not possible to confirm this from our methods.

Reliability testing

In addition to surveying the 522 primary households described above, we also asked the respondents in the primary households to tell us about the households of their two closest neighbours. The neighbourhood method assumes that respondents' neighbours are essentially random and representative of the general population, that respondents are aware of the presence of unaccompanied and separated children in their neighbours' households, and that the respondents do not have reasons to inflate or deflate the numbers of unaccompanied and separated children they know. We performed multiple sub-analyses to test these assumptions in the context of North Kivu.

Disaggregation by household type (primary respondent and neighbours)

First, we disaggregated our findings by household type, ie, primary respondents and neighbours. If primary households were providing valid and reliable reports about themselves and their neighbours, we would expect the findings from the neighbours' households to be very similar to the findings from the primary households.

Statistical tests were performed to quantify the probability that the findings were equal across groups. However, we found that differences were statistically significant for most values compared. Specifically, primary respondents tended to report about one less person in their neighbours' households compared to their own. There was also a trend towards lower separation prevalence among neighbours' households compared to primary households. It is plausible that respondents might not be aware of the detailed composition of their neighbours' households or that they became fatigued by the interview process and thus under-reported about their neighbours in an effort to finish the interview.

Agreement between neighbours

In addition to our main survey sample, we also selected a sub-sample of 44 neighbour pairs to more directly assess the reliability of respondents' reports about their neighbours. One respondent from each household within the pair was asked to provide information about their own household and the household of their neighbour. We then used a Kappa statistic to calculate the level of agreement within pairs reporting on the same household. The Kappa statistic measures agreement that is beyond what would be expected by chance alone.

Overall, the results suggest fair to moderate agreement between households and their neighbours for most variables. However, there was less agreement on household size before the emergency, the number of children living in the household before the emergency, and the number of departures. This may indicate that respondents' knowledge of their neighbours' historical composition is more limited than respondents' knowledge of their neighbours' current composition. This may be an important consideration, given the long recall period provided through this pilot.

Agreement between informants

A similar reliability analysis was also conducted to assess agreement between different respondents within a given household. Specifically, we considered whether or not information provided by adults was consistent with information provided by adolescents about the same household. It is widely recognised that children and adults have different perspectives and views on their environment, especially on matters that directly affect children. However, the potential value of children's unique insight must be balanced against the particular safety and ethical concerns related to involving minors in sensitive discussions. Results suggest that in North Kivu, and on the subject of UASC, there is no significant difference between data collected from adult respondents versus adolescent respondents.

Findings from key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were undertaken alongside the surveys at 17 of the 20 selected sites. Such interviews can provide information on the nature of separation that contextualises, reinforces and adds to the survey results.

All those interviewed confirmed family separation as an issue at all selected sites and highlighted the forced nature of separation in most cases caused by conflict/war and, related to this, death of parents/families for those children categorised as arrivals in households.

To a specific question about the causes of separation, respondents provided more varied information, for example including as causes parents' sickness or remarriage (including mothers to soldiers, with children excluded from the new household) and poverty (children moving to find food, education, shelter, money, better opportunities). Children were also being left behind in camps while their parents returned to their villages, making them more at risk of further separation as a result.

Key informants also described the care arrangements for these UASC in their communities: children were being looked after by the *Chef de Village* himself [at all sites visited, the *Chef* was male], by extended family members or by spontaneous host families, or they were living on their own in child-headed households. What comes across from the interview is the centrality of the role of the *Chef de Village* in caring for UASC. Examples are provided of what the *Chef* can do once he hears of a case of UASC including: some UASC live with the *Chef*, he finds host families for children, he follows up on the care of UASC in these families, instigates family tracing (different ways: reports, radio, word of mouth), shares information, prevents further separation, addresses basic needs:

"The Chef shares information on newly separated children with the radio in Goma and waits for feedback from there in case the family members of the child are traced. Information is shared with the Chef de Groupement and the Chefferie."

The extent of community-based care as a response to separation is also clear from these interviews. This concurs with the results from the survey where children identified as *arrivals* are mainly living with family members – eg, uncles, aunts, grandparents – and the majority of children categorised as *departures* are thought to be being cared for by family. This also is consistent with the customary model of caring for children described to us by practitioners working in the DRC. The quality of care provided for these children in extended or spontaneous host families varies, however, as the two quotations below illustrate:

"If the parents die, another adult will take care of the child very well. They will not make a difference between their own children and the child."

"Separated children in the community are vulnerable… separated children are discriminated in the families that host them and aren't treated as the children of the family."

In general in relation to UASC, key informants spoke about their 'mediocre' situation in their community, describing poverty and lack of access to material provisions and essential services (health, clothes, food, education, shelter).

Heads of child-headed households were not included as survey respondents but key informants were asked in interviews about children in these households. Key informants provided information on the precarious state of such children, their survival strategies, and the additional protection risks they face as a result – details that do not come through from the survey. For example:

"…they go to Viruga Park to collect firewood to survive. In the park, there is the risk for children to be raped and then become sick. Some become prostitutes because life is expensive and they need to survive. In this way they may become pregnant."

An additional question was posed on the existence of residential care settings at the selected sites. In all villages, respondents said that there were no such settings – only extended family care or spontaneous host families. Examples were provided of residential care institutions (for example, orphanages) in Goma but not in the villages in Nyiragongo. Information from the surveys shows that some children classed as *departures* were thought to have moved into such institutions.

Findings from focus group discussions with UASC

The population-based survey relies on adult respondents to estimate the size and basic characteristics of the population of UASC due to a particular emergency 'event'. The use of focus group discussions (FGDs) with groups of UASC at the survey sites provided some information on separation from children themselves complementary to that gained by the survey. For example, a community mapping activity as part of the FGD revealed that some of the children's daytime activities included potentially risky income-generating strategies (eg, carrying bags at port, collecting firewood in parks overnight, building houses). Information was provided additional to that given by key informants, for example:

"Children go to Virunga Park on commission of other people in the camp, to collect firewood and receiving 1,000FF in exchange (US$1). As the park is far away, children sleep there outside/in the open air and are subject to various risks: snakes, mosquitos, sexual violence, killing, lack of food, tiredness and fraud. Sometimes the FLDR[5] ask children to give them all the firewood that they collected. They need to pay a tax to get into the park of 1,000FF."

When asked about night-time activity, children revealed that some of them were sleeping rough in their communities, not cared for by any household at night. This is something that might not be accounted for through a survey based on changes in household composition alone:

"Sleep outside, no shelter or place to live, in old tents or outside a neighbour's house who has given them food; group sleeping behind the church."

Children's views from the mapping activity on the spaces that they avoid/consider dangerous provide important prevention messages for other UASC in terms of their protection:

In field on your own: You can be killed or raped there, it happens.
By lake: Because they are afraid of soldiers and can be raped.

Children's accounts of their needs as UASC – eg, for education, food, clothes, shelter, livelihoods – echo those outlined by key informants. They also show how children manoeuvre themselves in order to secure such assistance, for example playing with children they know have parents so that they will be given food at the end of the day and:

"Daily routine is wandering in the village, looking for food and clothes and for people of goodwill who can help them. Routine is also helping people so that in return they will be given food."

In response to a question about who UASC talk to and spend time with, and who in their communities knows about separation, children mentioned priests, neighbours, the *Chef*, host families and NGOs. This provides some endorsement of neighbours as respondents for the survey tool. Some UASC said that they spent time with soldiers and that *"the soldiers host children at their base, give them food and children help them in some works"* – identifying other potential protection risks for children in need of material assistance.

While the information from FGDs is anecdotal and does not claim to be representative in any statistical way of all UASC in the surveyed area, it does contribute to our sense of the nature of separation in context and also highlights some limitations of the other data collection tools.

[5] Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda / Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda'

Learning and implications

Some key areas of learning can be identified from field testing the population-based estimation method in North Kivu, with implications for further development and field testing. Each area of learning is outlined below along with recommendations for future piloting.

1. Length of recall period

The population-based estimation method aims to estimate the prevalence of separation related to a discrete emergency at a specific point in time. In a protracted, complex emergency such as that in North Kivu, where multiple armed groups are in operation, the identification of a 'discrete emergency' affecting multiple communities presented a challenge. In discussion with Save the Children, its partners and community members, the M23 takeover of Goma in December 2012 was considered the most appropriate measurement reference point for the pilot, one which all communities visited would be affected by and able to recall. However, this emergency 'event' happened 18 months prior to our data collection exercise, increasing the potential for including separations in our measurement exercise that were not connected to that particular spike in conflict.

Recommendation: Seek a recent acute-onset emergency setting for the next pilot of the estimation method. The method was originally intended for use in acute emergencies. Having a shorter recall period may reduce misreporting and capture emergency-related separations with greater precision.

2. Length and format of survey tool

Despite refinements prior to data collection, the survey tool was long, could be cumbersome (for example, attaching the household cards and additional forms to the main survey form) and required a particular skill-set for its effective administration. As a result, full comprehension of how to use the survey instrument did not crystallize for many of the interviewers until a few days into the data collection process. Surveys could take between 30 and 90 minutes, depending upon the complexity of the three households covered in each survey.

Recommendation: Use tablets for electronic data collection in the next pilot, given the particular pressures to produce timely results in acute emergencies.

3. Data collected by survey tool

The content of the survey tool was reviewed based on the pilot in North Kivu and gaps were reviewed. For example, there was a lack of data on the number of child-headed households, which is important for accurate estimation of unaccompanied children at each site. Also, children in residential care settings are only partly captured as departures by the survey tool (children who have left the household and moved to 'orphanages') and could be a large part of the UASC population in some contexts. The quantitative measurement of separation as intentional or unintentional, primary or secondary also needs to be refined.

Recommendations:

- **Modify the survey tool: (a) add questions that would allow us to quantitatively capture primary versus secondary separations; (b) improve the wording of questions about intentional versus unintentional separations for clarity; and (c) ask interviewers who go to child-headed households to record the total number of children living there.** This would provide us with basic data on unaccompanied children without the ethical issues associated with interviewing minors.

- **Consider the development of an additional set of tools capturing the existence and scale of movement into residential care settings as a result of an emergency.**

4. Diversity of survey sites

Because we only surveyed 108 households in four IDP camps in North Kivu, it is difficult to draw conclusions about separation in these settings from our data. For example, displaced people may have more limited knowledge about their neighbours, although our data from North Kivu did not suggest this was the case. A larger sample of camps/displaced settings is needed to explore these elements in depth. This will enable us to more thoroughly evaluate the viability of our measurement methodology across different types of settings.

Recommendation: Sufficiently 'power' the study for disaggregation by camps and villages or displaced and non-displaced settings in the next pilot (depending on pilot context).

5. Neighbourhood method and survey respondents

Use of the neighbourhood method in the DRC pilot yielded mixed results. While the disaggregation of findings by household type did show significant differences between primary respondents and neighbours, the Kappa analyses showed mostly fair to moderate agreement. Also, our findings must be considered in context. Reporting about neighbours in protracted emergencies such as North Kivu may be less reliable than in settings with recent, acute emergencies with shorter recall periods. In addition, as already noted, respondent fatigue may have contributed to incomplete responses as the interview progressed, especially for the second neighbour (third household).

Recommendations:

- **Pilot the neighbourhood method in at least one additional context in which respondents are asked to report on one neighbour, not two.** This adaptation is intended to shorten the interview and thereby minimise respondent fatigue. Compared to traditional surveys, using one neighbour still dramatically improves efficiency and reduces time and costs for information gathering.
- **Repeat the reliability analysis with a sub-sample of neighbours to see if the findings are similar in a new setting.**
- **Continue to use adults as the primary survey respondents, but also repeating the reliability analysis** with a sub-sample of adolescent respondents from the same households.


Beni
Lubero
Butembo
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Kayna
Kanyabayonga
Walikale
Rutshuru
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